

That lik a turtel trewe is my moornynge;
I may nat ete na moore than a mayde.
Go fro the wyndow, jakke fool, she sayde,
As help me God, it wol nat be, com ba me;
I love another, and elles I were to blame,
Wel bet than thee, by Jhesu, Absolon!
Go forth thy wey, or I wol caste a ston,
And lat me slepe, a twenty devel wey!
Alas, quod Absolon, and weylaway!
That trewe love was evere so ylle biset!
Thanne kyssse me, syn it may be no bet,
for Jhesus love, and for the love of me.
Wiltow thanne go thy wey? quod she.
Ye certes, lemman, quod this Absolon.
Thanne make thee redy, quod she, I come anon,
And unto Nicholas she seyde stille,
Now hust, and thou shalt laughen at thy fille.
This Absolon doun sette hym on his knees,
And seyde, I am a lord at alle degrees,
for after this I hope ther cometh moore.
Lemman, thy grace, and sweete bryd, thyn oore.
The wyndow she undoth, and that in haste;
Have do, quod she, com of, and speed thee faste,
Lest that oure neighebores thee espie.
This Absolon gan wype his mouth ful drie;
Dirk was the nyght as pich, or as the cole,
And at the wyndow out she pitte hir hole,
And Absolon, hym fil no bet ne wers,
But with his mouth he kiste hir naked ers
ful savourly, er he was war of this.
Abak he sturte, and thoughte it was amys,
for wel he wiste a womman hath no berd;
He felte a thyng al rough and long yherd,
And seyde, fy, alas, what have I do?
Tehee! quod she, and clapte the wyndow to;
And Absolon gooth forth a sory pas.
A berd, a berd! quod hende Nicholas,
By Goddes corpus, this goth faire and weel!
This sely Absolon herde every deel,
And on his lippe he gan for anger byte;
And to hymself he seyde, I shall thee quyte!
Who rubbeth now, who froteth now his
lippes
With dust, with sond, with straw, with
clooth, with chippes,
But Absolon? that seith ful ofte, Alas!
My soule bitake I unto Sathanas,
But me were levere than al this toun, quod he,
Of this despit awroken for to be.
Alas! quod he, alas! I nadde ybleynt,
his hoothe love was coold and al yqueynt;
for fro that tyme that he hadde kiste hir ers,
Of paramours he sette nat a kers;
for he was heeled of his maladie,
ful ofte paramours he gan defie,
And wepe as dooth a child that is ybete.
A softe paas he wente over the strete
Until a smyth men cleped daun Gerveys,
That in his forge smythed plough/harneys;
He sharpeþ shaar and kultour bisily,
This Absolon knokketh al esily,
And seyde, Ando, Gerveys, and that anon.
What, who artow? I am heere, Absolon.

What, Absolon! for Cristes sweete tree,
Why rise ye so rathe? ey benedicitee!
What eyleth yow? Som gay gerl, God it woot,
Hath brought yow thus upon the viritoot;
By seinte Note, ye woot wel what I mene.
This Absolon ne roghte nat a bene
Of al his pley; no word agayn he yaf;
He hadde moore tow on his distaf
Than Gerveys knew, and seyde, freend so deere,
That hoothe kultour in the chymenee heere,
As lene it me, I have therwith to doone,
And I wol brynge it thee agayn ful soone,
Gerveys answerde, Certes, were it gold,
Or in a poke nobles alle untold,
Thou sholdest have, as I am trewe smyth;
Ey, Cristes foo! what wol ye do therwith?
Cherof, quod Absolon, be as be may,
I shal wel telle it thee tomorwe day,
And caughte the kultour by the colde stele,
ful softe out at the dore he gan to stele,
And wente unto the carpenteres wal.
He cogheth first, and knokketh therwithal
Upon the wyndowe, right as he dide er,
This Absolon answerde, Who is ther
That knokketh so? I warante it a theef.
Why nay, quod he, God woot, my sweete leef,
I am thyn Absolon, my deereyng.
Of gold, quod he, I have thee brought a ryng;
My mooder yaf it me, so God me save;
ful fyn it is, and therto wel ygrave;
This wol I yeve thee, if thou me kisse.
This Nicholas was risen for to pisse,
And thoughte he wolde amenden al the jape,
He sholde kisse his ers, er that he scape;
And up the wyndowe dide he hastily,
And out his ers he putteth pryvely
Over the buttok, to the haunche/bon.
And therwith spak this clerk, this Absolon:
PEK, sweete bryd, I noot nat where thou art.
This Nicholas anon leet fle a fart,
As greet as it had been a thonder/dent,
That with the strook he was almoost yblent;
And he was redy with his iren hoot,
And Nicholas amyddde the ers he smoot.
Of gooth the skyn, an hande/brede aboute,
The hoothe kultour brende so his tute;
And for the smert he wende for to dye.
As he were wood, for wo he gan to crye,
Help! water! water! help, for Goddes herte!
This carpenter out of his slomber sterte,
And herde oon crien Water, as he were wood,
And thoughte, Alas, now comth Nowelis flood!
He sit hym up withouten wordes mo,
And with his ax he smoot the corde atwo,
And doun gooth al, he foond neither to selle,
Ne breed ne ale, til he cam to the selle
Upon the floor; and ther aswowne he lay.
And stirte hire Alison, and Nicholay,
And criden, Out! & Harrow! in the strete.
The neighebores, bothe smale and grete
In ronnen for to gauren on this man
That yet aswowne he lay, bothe pale and wan;
for with the fal he brosten hadde his arm;

But stonde he moste unto his owene harm,
for whan he spak he was anon bore doun
With hende Nicholas and Alisoun.
They tolden every man that he was wood,
He was agast so of Nowelis flood
Thurgh fantasie, that of his vanytee
He hadde ybought hym knedynge/tubbes thre,
And hadde hem hanged in the roof above;
And that he preyde hem, for Goddes love,
To sitten in the roof, par compaignye.
The folk gan laughen at his fantasie;
Into the roof they hiken & they gape,
And turned al his harm unto a jape;
for whatso that this carpenter answerde,
It was for noght, no man his reson herde;
With othes grete he was so sworn adoun,
That he was holden wood in al the toun,
for every clerk anonright heeld with oother;
They seyde, The man was wood, my levee
broother.
And every wight gan laughen of this stryf.
This swyved was this carpenteres wyf,
for al his keyping and his jalousey;
And Absolon hath kist hir nether eye;
And Nicholas is scalded in the towte;
This tale is doon, and God save al the rowte!
Here endeth the Millere his Tale.

The prologe of the Reves Tale.

AN folk hadde laughen at this
nyce cas
Of Absolon & hende Nicholas,
Diverse folk, diversely they
seyde,
But for the moore part, they
loughe and pleyde;
Ne at this tale I saugh no man hym greve,
But it were oonly Osewold the Reve.
Bycause he was of carpenteris craft
A litel ire is in his herte ylaft.
He gan to grucche and blamed it a lite.
So theek, quod he, ful wel koude I yow quite,
With blyeryng of a proude millers eye,
If that me liste speke of ribaudye,
But ik am oold, me list no pley for age,
Gras/tyme is doon, my fodder is now forage;
This white tope writeth myne olde yeres;
Myn herte is mowled also as myne heres,
But if I fare as dooth an open/ers;
That ilke fruyt is ever leng the wers

HEERE BIGYNNETH THE REVES TALE.

A Crumppyngtoun, nat
fer fro Cantebrygge,
Ther gooth a brook, &
over that a brigge,
Upon the whiche brook
ther stant a melle;
And this is verraysooth
that I yow tell.
A millere was ther dwel-
lynge many a day,

Til it be roten in mullok, or in stree.
We olde men, I drede, so fare we;
Til we be roten kan we nat be rype.
We hoppen ay, whil that the world wol pype,
for in oure wyl ther stiketh evere a nayl
To have an hoor heed and a grene tayl,
As hath a leek; for thogh oure myght be goon,
Oure wyl desireth folie evere in oon;
for whan we may nat doon, than wol we speke,
Yet in oure asschen olde is fyr yreke.
foure gleedes han we, whiche I shal devyse,
Hvaunting, lying, anger, covetise.
Thise foure sparkles longen unto celde.
Oure olde lymmes mowe wel been unweelde,
But wyl ne shal nat failen, that is sooth;
And yet ik have alwey a coltes tooth,
As many a yeer as it is passed henne
Syn that my tappe of lif bigan to renne.
for sikerly, whan I was bore, anon
Deeth drough the tappe of lyf and leet it gon;
And ever sithe hath so the tappe yronne,
Til that almoost al empty is the tonne.
The stream of lyf now droppeth on the chymbe,
The sely tonge may wel ryng and chymbe
Of wrecchednesse that passed is ful yore;
With olde folk, save dotage, is namoore.

AN that oure hoost hadde herd
this sermonyng,
He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng.
He seide: What amounteth al this wit?
What, shul we speke alday of booly writ?
The devel made a Reve for to preche,
And of a souter a shipman or a leche.
Sei forth thy tale, and tarie nat the tyme,
Lo, Depeford, and it is half wey pryme.
Lo, Grenewych, ther many a shrewe is inne;
It were al tyme thy tale to bigynne.
Now, sires, quod this Osewold the Reve,
I pray yow alle that ye nat yow greve,
Thogh I answer and somdeel sette his howwe,
for lefevil is, with force, force of showwe;
This dronke Millere hath ytold us heer,
How that bigyled was a carpenter,
Peraventure in scorn, for I am oon,
And, by youre leve, I shal him quite anon.
Right in his cherles termes wol I speke;
I pray to God his nekke mote breke.
He kan wel in myn eye seen a stalke,
But in his owene he kan nat seen a balke.
Thus endeth the prologe of the Reve.

As any pecock he was proud and gay,
Pipen he koude, and fiashe, and nettes beete,
And turne coppes, and wel wrastle and sheete;
And by his belt he baar a long panade,
And of a swerd ful trenchant was the blade.
A joly poppere baar he in his pouche,
Ther was no man, for peril, dorste hym touche;
A Sheffield thwitel baar he in his hose,
Round was his face, and camuse was his nose;
As piled as an ape was his skulle.